

HERALD-WHIG

First Summit of Hope in Quincy assists parolees with re-entry, seeks to cut recidivism

By Matt Hopf Herald-Whig
Aug. 30, 2017

QUINCY -- Bishop E.L. Warren looked at an audience of about 200 people and reminded them that they have a purpose, even though they have spent time in prison.

"When you were in prison, you had a purpose; it didn't change," Warren said. "When you got out, you still had a purpose. Your purpose never changes."

Warren, the pastor of the Cathedral of Worship, spoke Tuesday at the Oakley-Lindsay Center, where the Summit of Hope, a resource fair put on by the Illinois Department of Corrections for parolees, was held. The congregation provided many volunteers for the fair.

The goal of the Summit of Hope is simple: to reduce recidivism.

Marcus King saw the benefit when he was stopped by a person who attended a previous Summit of Hope and told him how he was able to turn his life around.

"You can't save everyone, but you at least need to try," said King, a senior community outreach coordinator with the Department of Corrections. "It's all about hope. I hope we can help everyone. That's why it's called the Summit of Hope."

King organizes resource fairs for parolees across the state.

"Many times when people are incarcerated, they get detached from the basic needs," King said. "What we do is bring those resources together to collectively serve the people and give them a second chance."

Booths help people obtain state IDs, offer them substance abuse treatment and counseling resources, present them with job training and employment opportunities, and make them aware of other social service agencies.

This was the first time the Department of Corrections hosted a Summit of Hope in Quincy, and King expects to return.

He also hopes to bring a Summit of Health to Quincy, which deals specifically with physical and mental health of parolees.

Mike Emery of the U.S. attorney's office for the Central District of Illinois and former McLean County sheriff, said the justice system is evolving on community re-entry to

prevent future incarceration. He encouraged Summit of Hope attendees to use the services available to them.

"I know that you want to get focused, you want to be successful," Emery said. "If you're in jail, you're not getting a salary, you're not paying your bills, you're family is being neglected while you are away. When you're out of jail, you get a second chance.

"I heard someone say earlier 'third chance, fourth chance.' That's what they're willing to invest in you to make you successful and help you get a better life."

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